

DHS Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov

DHS “heroes” feted June 7 for outstanding work, team play, community role

Twenty DHS staff members received “Hero” awards from the Department of Human Services on June 7. The 20 staff members work in foster care, adoption, administrative support and adult services. They were honored for good work, teamwork, community participation and providing quality service during a ceremony in Lansing. They are:



Vanderzalm



Dorsey



Roszkowski



Schrank

■ Foster care – **Lisa Garcia-Herr** of Grand Traverse-Leelanau DHS; **Robert Lewis** of Barry County; **Linda Skipski** of St. Joseph County; **Brian Vanderzalm** of Newaygo County; **Jennifer Wrayno** of Wayne South Central CFS.

■ Adoption – **Julie Beckett** of Van Buren County; **Jim Criste** of Lenawee County; **Jean Peirce** of Alpena County; **Lillie Dorsey** of Wayne County Central CFS; and **BarBara Ford** of Washtenaw County.

■ Administrative support – **Shannon Louisignau** of Benzie County; **Dennis Roszkowski** of Wayne County Central CFS; **Tory Richards** of Chippewa-Luce DHS; **Melissa Dowlyn** of Otsego County; **Joan King** of Delta County.

■ Adult services – **Kristy Schrank** and **Al Myatt** of Saginaw County; **Lois Fanslow** of Clinton County; **Ron Kramer** of Benzie County; **Rosanna Mouton** of Ingham County.

The “Heroes” is part of the DHS Employee Recognition Program. Winners were nominated by supervisors and were selected for their leadership in the community, demonstrated excellence at work and extraordinary service to families.

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A DHS-Net Employee Information link to the program (DHS Hero Awards) includes nominating criteria and will include photos and information on the winners.

DHS employee named manager of the year by statewide association

Rita Hotchkin, director of purchasing for the Department of Human Services, was named “Manager of the Year” by Michigan Public Purchasing Officers Association at its annual award ceremony May 23. Hotchkin has been with the department for 28 years and in purchasing since 1997.

“Hotchkin was awarded the honor because, among other things, she took a lead role in completing an RFP for a new contract for the Electronic Benefit Transfer used by DHS clients who receive Food Assistance and other cash benefits,” the association said in its newsletter.

“In addition, Hotchkin was key in managing and coordinating directives for purchasing restrictions and moratoria in the last two fiscal years. She led her team of buyers by exploring options for cost reductions and developed a project to determine feasibility and cost-effectiveness of new digital multi-functional devices in all DHS offices.”

Michigan Public Purchasing Officers Association is a nonprofit association comprised of purchasing officials from publicly funded agencies such as cities, counties, schools, colleges, road commissions and agencies from the state government. Founded in 1971, it is the second oldest statewide public purchasing association in the country. For more information go online to www.mppoa.net

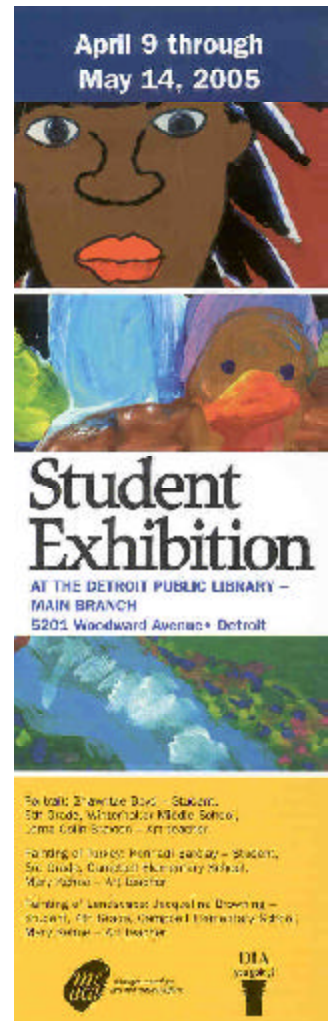
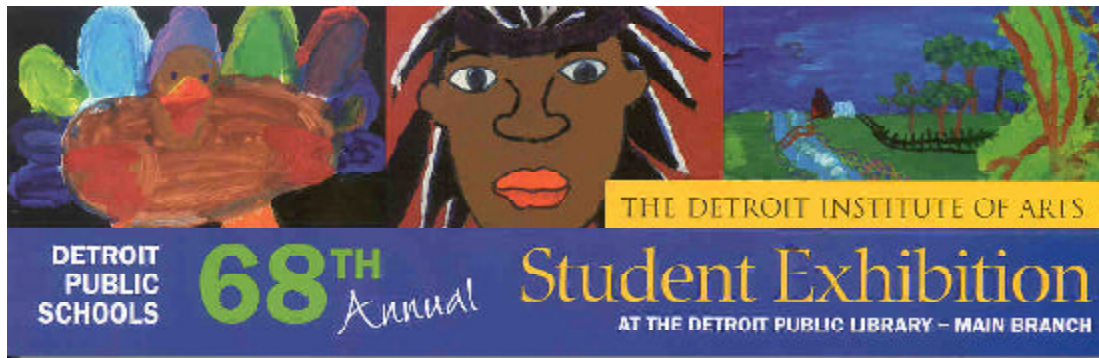


Rita Hotchkin with her award.

Artistic offspring wins award

From Michelle Pruitt, Family Independence Specialist
Wayne County DHS Glendale District, Highland Park
PruittM@michigan.gov

This prize-winning drawing (below and right) is currently being used for the Detroit Public Schools official bookmark. The turkey is drawn by [Stacey Robinson](#)'s daughter, Kennadi Barclay. Stacey works as a FIS at the Glendale office. Her daughter is a third grade student at Campbell Elementary School. The students' artwork was featured at the Detroit Public Library's annual student exhibition this year.



“Penny war” raged in Ottawa County

Warring sides dedicate almost \$1,600 to charity

From Cindy Ryskamp, Family Independence Manager
Ottawa County DHS, Holland
RyskampC@michigan.gov

Ottawa County Department of Human Services recently raised \$1559.98 for the American Cancer Society during a four-month “penny war” where staffs in the county office were pitted against one another in a fundraising effort.

Money was raised as competing staff members filled their containers with pennies and were assigned one point for each penny in the container. The rules allowed competitors to reduce the number of points earned by others by putting any other coins or currency in the penny containers. For example, each dollar put in the penny jar would reduce the jar's total by 100 points.

Containers were emptied every week or two and a running total of points was maintained by the catalyst for the war, family independence specialist [Val Haley](#). A rotating trophy was given weekly to the leader.

The trophy spent most of the war in the office of [Ruth Racine](#) as her FIS and ES staff stayed in the lead. Ruth's staff was the overall winner with 17,765 points beating all other staffs combined by over 3,000 points.

One staff member, FIS [Xav Ramirez](#), brought in so many pennies some thought he was manufacturing pennies in his basement. The best efforts of the other staffers to cancel them out couldn't keep them from winning by an overwhelming margin.

Ottawa County showed their willingness to step forward and meet this challenge and the American Cancer Society will benefit from their generosity. Thanks to Val Haley for issuing the challenge to the staff and making the “penny war” fun.



Got something to say?

Is war raging in your county? Do you have something to say about a local DHS project, an interesting event, or an individual that works in your county? Share it with other DHS employees! Send your story to DHS-
Newsletter@michigan.gov Please ensure your boss and subject know first.

Lapeer County no island but still has "Survivor" challenge

From Barb Pinch
Lapeer County DHS, Lapeer
PinchB@michigan.gov

For three months most of the Lapeer County DHS staff participated in our own version of "Survivor", the TV show. This turned out to be lots of fun and a great morale booster.



Lapeer County DHS's
Orange & Green teams



were done in less than 10 minutes and were light-hearted. They included: balloon volleyball, listing Clint Eastwood movies, creating and performing a team cheer, blindfold putt-putt, and coming up with new uses for the kitchen spatula. Rewards were little items such as gel pens, note pads, stress balls, and lottery tickets.

The culmination of the survivor challenge was a potluck luncheon, final team reward challenge and the presentation of the grand prize to the winner. This last team challenge was the absolute best – both teams were to perform a rap or a song that reflected their experience of the last several months. As it turned out both teams, unbeknownst to the other, reworked the lyrics to the "Gilligan Island" theme song and did a great job of entertaining one another with their performances.

Staff shared lots of laughs poking a little fun at one another along the way. We anticipate doing this again during the next season of Survivor. If anyone has an interest in hearing more about this please contact Barb Pinch at (810) 667-0831 or email PinchB@michigan.gov

Here's how the game worked: Individual players drew the name of one of the TV Survivor players and also drew a place on one of two teams. As an individual player the goal was to be the final survivor and this would be whoever was representing the TV character winning on the TV show. This player won dinner and a movie for two.

The more important component of the game was that each player was a member of a team that competed in weekly "reward challenges". Most challenges

DHS employee & songwriter

From Shelly Marner, CPS Supervisor
Midland County DHS, Midland
MarnerS@michigan.gov

A prevention worker for Midland County DHS is an excellent musician and has recorded several CDs. He recently wrote the words and music to a song called "Reckless Words" that is being used in presentations by Jodee Blanco, a nationally renowned speaker and author.



Marty Froman

Marty Froman was asked to perform at a local training program in Midland. Blanco, who writes and talks on the subject of bullying, was the guest speaker at the training session. Froman performed "Reckless Words" a song he composed after a middle school student shot himself at his school cafeteria in front of his peers.

Blanco was duly impressed and asked Froman to record this song for her use and distribution in her national programs. For more information on Jodee Blanco and bullying prevention, please go to www.jodeeblanco.com Marty Froman's Web site – www.martyfroman.com – is currently offline. In the interim, check out something about him at www.geocities.com/Nashville/5253/



On April 28 the staff of the Genesee County Pierson Road District office brought their children to work. A total of 54 children (pictured above) attended the activities. The first task that they were asked to do was to complete an application for assistance with help from their "worker" (parent). The second task was a contest to design a logo that helped illustrate how well the children understood what their parents do each day and how important their work is to the community. One of the logos pictured a person saying "I need help" and another person saying, "I will help." In the afternoon the children were given a demonstration on CPR, how to handle different injuries and breathing problems. Earl Bailey, a FIS and volunteer fireman, gave the demo. Throughout the entire day the children observed their parents as they performed their job functions. Each child received a certificate with their name on it, denoting their participation in the day's events. At the end of the day, when the sounds of children's voices could no longer be detected, many of us commented on how we missed the children even after such a brief visit. The day was a great success and we are all looking forward to doing it again next year.

– from Julia Williams

Date: June 2
To: Michaelene White, CPS Supervisor
Kent County DHS. Grand Rapids
Subj: Kevin Hall

This is in reference to Kevin Hall who worked on-call the evening of May 31. I was working a difficult case with an outside county with no follow up for a child whose report was filed four days prior. Kevin was extremely helpful to me to ensure this child received the services he needed with less trauma to the child and family. The approach Kevin took was the child's needs (come) first. Kevin went above and beyond in helping this child and I. As a facility that often works with other agencies, it is worth noting that Kevin is very easy to work with (and) he exhibits an easy and open manner. I extend my thanks and appreciation to Kevin as this type approach is truly commendable.

Elizabeth Patterson, Social Worker

Spectrum Health Emergency Department, Grand Rapids

■ *Kevin Hall is a children's protective services worker with Kent County DHS in Grand Rapids.*

Your letters,
intercepted
and otherwise

Date: June 2
To: Marianne Udow, Director
Department of Human Services
Subj: Wayne County Highland Park staff

And you have over and over again shown your appreciation for the work that DHS employees provide. I decided to inform you of my personal experience after receiving your memo regarding May and Foster Care Month. My two (relatives) were placed with me a year ago after protective services and DHS got a court order to take them from my (relative) who has multiple issues including drug addiction. Child abuse and neglect had been taking place for some time. I did intervene as much as I could but it didn't have much impact on the situation.

In came DHS to the rescue. There is no doubt in my mind that something real bad would have happened by now if DHS did not act. I would like to give special thanks for the initial services provided by **Shirley Edwards** of the (Wayne County Child & Family Services North) office. She informed me of all of the procedures and court actions. She even accompanied the Wayne County sheriff's when they went to take my (relatives) from my (relative's) home.

I would like to also give appreciation for all of the continued help and assistance that **(Cheryl) Mullins** of the (CFS) office provided. She has done everything from monthly home visits to check on the kids to assisting fill out medical forms and more. Both of these DHS employees did this without knowing my position with DHS at first. These two employees make you and DHS look good & very competent. (Their service is) well appreciated.

Myron Wahls

Detroit

■ *Myron Wahls is a case specialist for the Disability Determination Service office in Detroit. Shirley Edwards and Cheryl Mullins are services specialists with Wayne County CFS North in Highland Park.*

Date: June 1
To: Linda VanHouten, Family Independence Manager
Wexford-Missaukee Family Independence Agency, Cadillac
Subj: Piedad Medina

This is just a note to tell you how much we appreciate Pie Medina. She is always pleasant to talk to, she always answers your calls, she always makes sure you understand what and how things happen. She doesn't leave you hanging, and she makes sure that your question is answered. You call with a question, you know she will call you right back. She doesn't leave you for a week or so. She gets the paperwork done fast. We just truly appreciate her every effort and pleasantness so very much. She never makes you feel like your question was dumb. I know she is busy but she takes a minute to answer you and she never is cross with you.

Diane Lutke

McBain

■ *Piedad Medina is an eligibility specialist with Wexford-Missaukee DHS.*

DHS Matters! is a product of Michigan's Department of Human Services
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Larry VanDeSande, editor • Submit stories by e-mail to: DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov